

REMARKS

In paragraphs 3 and 4 of the final Action, claims 3-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, and claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. In paragraph 5 of the final Action, claims 5 and 9 were objected to. In paragraph 7 of the final Action, claims 3 and 6-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Patent Abstract No. 09238653 (JP '653).

In view of the rejections and objection, claims 3-8 have been canceled, and claim 9 has been amended to obviate the objection. Therefore, claim 9 is now pending in the application. Claim 9 is allowable over JP '653, as explained below.

As clearly recited in claim 9, in a method for producing a meat product or processed meat product, at first, the meat product or processed meat product is prepared, and an alkaline aqueous solution of curdlan is applied onto the meat product or processed meat product to form a film of curdlan gel onto the meat product or processed meat product. Thereafter, an aqueous solution of any one of an alkali metal salt, an alkaline earth metal salt and acid is applied onto the meat product or processed meat product with the film of the curdlan gel, to complete the film of the curdlan gel.

The above process is explained on page 6, lines 7-10 of the specification such that "In making the edible casings in the form of curdlan gel film, the above-described alkaline aqueous solution of curdlan is first applied to the surface of the meat product or the processed meat product." (emphasis added)

Also, it is explained on page 6, line 20 to page 7, line 1 of the specification that "If necessary, excess alkali aqueous solution of curdlan remaining on the surface of the meat product or the processed meat product is removed by, for example, shaking, and the still remaining alkaline aqueous solution of curdlan is exposed either to an aqueous solution of alkali metal or alkaline earth metal or to an acidic aqueous solution. In this manner, a complete film of curdlan gel can be formed." (emphasis added)

Further, it is stated on page 8, lines 13-16 of the specification that "The resulting gel is then heat-treated at 70 to 125°C to make the gel thermoirreversible. This treatment increases the strength of the gel and at the same time imparts to the casing a texture similar to that of natural intestine." (emphasis added)

Namely, in the invention, the film of curdlan gel is formed onto the meat product or processed meat product by applying the alkaline aqueous solution of curdlan onto the meat product

or processed meat product. In order to complete the film of curdlan gel, the alkali metal salt, alkaline earth metal salt or acid is applied onto the meat product or processed meat product with the film of the curdlan gel. Accordingly, the curdlan gel film is formed onto the product. The texture of the curdlan gel is similar to natural intestine.

Accordingly, the curdlan treatment to the meat product of the invention does not substantially cause any change inside the meat product. Only gel film is formed on the product.

In JP '653, an aqueous alkali solution containing curdlan is only added to a raw material for a processed edible meat. It is stated in the abstract of JP '653 that "By adding the obtained mixture to a raw material for a processed edible meat and forming processed edible means is obtained." Namely, the aqueous alkali solution with curdlan is added to the meat product to improve the quality of the meat product, NOT applied onto the meat product to form the gel film.

JP '653 fails to disclose, teach or suggest the step of applying the coating of an alkaline aqueous solution of curdlan onto the meat product, and the step of applying the alkali metal salt, alkaline earth metal salt or acid onto the meat product or processed meat product with the film of the curdlan gel. Accordingly, the curdlan gel film is NOT formed onto the product in JP '653.


Since JP '653 fails to disclose, teach or suggest each and every feature recited in claim 9, the rejection of claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is improper. Applicants respectfully submit, therefore, that independent claim 9 is patentable over the applied art.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claim 9 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,


Manabu Kanesaka
Registration No. 31,467

1700 Diagonal Road, Suite 310
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 519-9785